



**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
TOWN OF NEW MARLBOROUGH
OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
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**Tara B. White, Chair
Nathaniel H. Yohalem
Michele Shalaby
Board of Selectmen**

**Minutes of Selectmen's Meeting
July 14, 2014
Meeting with Rep. Pignatelli and Senator Downing**

Board Members Present: Tara B. White, Chairman
Michele Shalaby
Nat Yohalem

Others Present: Michael Skorput, Administrative Assistant
Sharon Fleck, Administrative Secretary
Senator Ben Downing
Rep. "Smitty" Pignatelli
Larry Burke
Joan Hotaling
John Hotaling
Jim Lovejoy
Ellie Lovejoy
Jim Newman
Brian Killeen
Bill Gardett
Prue Spaulding
Chuck Loring
Charles Ketchen
David Smith, Jr.
H. Dennis Sears
Mark Carson

The meeting of the Board of Selectmen with Representative Pignatelli and Senator Downing convened 6 p.m.

Select Chair Tara White expressed her gratitude to everyone who attended this meeting, and especially to Representative Pignatelli and Senator Downing for taking time from their schedules to offer their assistance/suggestions to the representatives from neighboring towns. Chairman White indicated that this meeting was prompted by a March 27, 2014 article in the Berkshire Eagle.

Rep. Pignatelli defined his comment as Great Barrington being the “hub of South Berkshire County,” stating that large towns such as Great Barrington, Pittsfield, and North Adams could play an important role in regionalization with the smaller towns.

State Money – Chair White asked what the smaller towns could do together in view of the fact that the State has cut back in funding. Rep Pignatelli stated that there is more money available for education, etc. and that recovery from 2008 is still a work in progress. He also stated they are working with the Governor to release more Chapter 90 money. The Legislator has approved \$300 million for infrastructure projects, but the Governor has not yet released all that money. Both Rep. Pignatelli and Senator Downing would like to see those funds released this year under the current Governor.

Hwy. Superintendent, Chuck Loring, brought up the issue of the lack of Chapter 90 funds for road and bridge repairs. Rep. Pignatelli suggested he call Peter Miles, MassDOT District Highway Director, located in Lenox, to set up an appointment in which both Rep. Pignatelli and Senator Downing will attend. One of the subjects to be discussed is State Road 57 engineering costs and money to repair this road. The Town would have to spend approximately \$300,000.00 in engineering costs before Chapter 90 monies can be applied for – but with no guarantee that funds will be awarded to the Town. The issue was then raised about the State taking over the responsibility of maintaining Rt. 57 to which Rep. Pignatelli replied that it’s worth talking about, but would like figures on how much it costs the Town each year to maintain.

Regionalization - Selectman Shalaby asked of Rep. Pignatelli and Senator Downing how a small town can participate in regionalization with larger towns, when the larger towns appear to have more to offer than the smaller towns. Rep. Pignatelli responded by saying that the smaller towns have more to offer than is realized, i.e. purchasing large equipment, such as a grader, back-hoe, and snow plows, etc. offer many opportunities for towns to cooperate with each other. Selectmen Shalaby also asked for help in sustaining the services we have, such as volunteers, who are not as readily available as in the past. Senator Pignatelli suggested that regionalization of services can be attained while maintaining each town’s identity, and that meetings with the neighboring towns are a good place to start. Some areas of regionalization include sand/salt purchases, equipment purchases, fuel oil and also to share capital plan information with neighboring communities in an effort to minimize expenditures.

A suggestion was made from the floor to look at what Pioneer Valley has done in regionalization of services.

Senior Tax Work-off Program – Prue Spaulding was concerned that as minimum wages increase, the Senior Tax Work-Off Program should also increase. Rep. Pignatelli stated that minimum wages are expected to increase to \$9.00 in January 2015 and to \$11.00 January 2016. Prue will write a letter to both Rep Pignatelli and Sen. Downing requesting their assistance in bringing this issue to the Legislature.

Broadband – Selectman Shalaby will meet with Rep. Pignatelli in August to further understand the delays in the “last mile,” and the MBI funding. Ninety (\$90) million dollars have already been spent but an additional \$50 million needs to be released. Senator Downing further stated that Wired West will continue with this project until it becomes a “no-bid” item for them.

Community Benefit Tax – Selectman Yohalem discussed the possibility of instituting a Community Benefit Tax on real estate being sold in New Marlborough. The percentage of the tax, as well as the minimum housing sale to which this would apply can be determined at a later date. This proposed tax would serve a specific use, i.e. roads, etc. Senator Downing stated that a program such as this exists in Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. Senator Downing will provide Selectman Yohalem with additional information on those programs.

School Transportation – Senator Downing felt that one of the priorities should be school transportation. He stated that Chapter 70, or Chapter 71, monies might be available because, in a case such as this, regionalization doesn't always work.

Community Preservation Act – Rep Pignatelli brought up the issue of a Community Preservation Act Tax. He stated a lot of towns were adopting this for preservation, open space and recreation or affordable housing or perhaps for a community project such as painting Town Hall. The Board of Selectmen will explore this opportunity.

Verizon - An issue was raised about the lack of service from Verizon, i.e. broadband, etc., and Verizon's lack of response to the needs of the region.

State Mandates - Although not discussed in detail, Selectman Shalaby voiced her concern over the mandates a small town receives from the State, i.e. requiring two EMTs on board to transport a patient. She also would like to know the origin of the requirements that increase the need to go to BMC vs. Fairview.

At 7:25 p.m. Chairman White expressed her thanks and gratitude to both Rep. Pignatelli and Senator Downing for their time and input into helping small towns, and for taking time out of their busy schedules to come to New Marlborough.

Being that there was no further business to be brought before the Board, a motion was made, seconded and so voted by all members to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Fleck
Administrative Secretary